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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3092  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9800  
RUEHN/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3181  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0883  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0286  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0241  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2258  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6767  
RUEHB/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4638  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0038  
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1256  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001183

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TAGS: PGOV PREL CE NO

SUBJECT: SCANDINAVIANS CONTINUE TO PRESS TIGERS ON EU MONITOR ISSUE

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires James F. Entwistle for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Scandinavians continue to try to get the Tigers to back down from their insistence that SLMM members from EU countries leave by September 1. After an unsuccessful trip to Kilinochchi by the Norwegian Charge' at the end of last week, a Swedish diplomat arrives today from Stockholm. After that, Norwegian facilitator John Hanssen-Bauer will take up the issue if necessary in early August, with the possibility of a Solheim visit before September 1. End Summary

EU Must Go

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¶2. (C) Norwegian Charge' Oddvar Laagreid told Charge' and British DCM July 19 that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continue to insist that all members of the Nordic-staffed Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) from EU member countries must cease their duties by September 1 but that efforts are under way to get the Tigers to reconsider. Laagreid went to Kilinochchi July 14 to "outline the consequences" of the Tiger ultimatum to LTTE political chief Tamilchelvan. Laagreid said he had stressed that if Norway were left alone to staff the SLMM it would mean a reduction in force by at least half. District offices would have to be closed and the SLMM's ability to adequately monitor the cease-fire agreement (CFA) would decrease correspondingly. Before monitors from non-Scandinavian countries could be brought on board, the CFA itself would have to be renegotiated between the Tigers and the government since the current agreement specifies that SLMM monitors will be from Nordic countries. Tamilchelvan listened politely" but made clear that the Central Committee had made a decision which was final, Laagreid said.

¶13. (C) Laagreid advised Charge' that the next step will be a senior Swedish diplomat who arrives from Stockholm July 19 to go to Kilinochchi and, over the next few days, try again to make the Tigers see reason. Assuming that attempt does not yield results, the issue will be high on the agenda when Norwegian envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer arrives in Sri Lanka August 2 for his next effort on the peace process. Laagreid commented that if Hanssen-Bauer is unable to "get the Tigers to budge" on the EU issue it is likely that Erik Solheim will come himself before the September 1 deadline. The advantage there, Laagreid pointed out, is that Solheim would likely see LTTE supremo Prabhakaran.

No New Ideas Coming From Oslo

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¶14. (C) Beyond the EU/SLMM conundrum, Hanssen-Bauer will be ready to "do the usual back and forth on peace," Laagreid noted. In his trip north last week, however, Laagreid had, on instructions from Oslo, made clear to the LTTE that Hanssen-Bauer "will not be bringing any new ideas." "It is up the parties to come up with new ideas," Laagreid said. He has passed an identical message to the government. There is no indication of such "new thinking" on either side, Laagreid commented. He assessed that the Tigers are being a bit more intransigent than the government at the moment, citing as an example the government's stated willingness to go into LTTE-controlled territory for the next round of talks so that the Tigers do not have to travel overseas (so far the Tigers response via the Norwegians has been that "the time is not right.").

Tigers Never Agreed to Release Cop

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¶15. (C) Laagreid noted that he had appealed in strong terms to the Tigers to release the one government policeman who is still in Tiger custody after being detained with several colleagues ten months ago after pursuing a suspected foreign pedophile into Tiger-controlled territory. Tamilchelvan had been initially positive about "seeing what could be done." After consultations, however, Tamilchelvan had shown Laagreid a letter which the LTTE official said had been sent by the Tigers to the government four months ago in which it had proposed to trade the policeman for five LTTE cadres detained by the government last year. The Tigers told Laagreid no response had ever been received but that the offer stood. Laagreid said he had carried this back to the government.

¶16. (C) The next day newspaper headlines heralded an LTTE agreement to release the policeman on humanitarian grounds. Laagreid said he suspects the government had planted this erroneous story in order to create the public impression that the Tigers had reneged on an agreed release. "They never agreed to release him so they couldn't have reneged!" The Norwegian noted that he had subsequently urged (unsuccessfully) the Tigers to release the policeman in connection with the government's agreement to let LTTE spokesman Dayamaster come to Colombo for cardiac treatment. Again, however, the Tigers had not agreed to or reneged on anything. "It was an appeal, not a deal."

Comment

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¶17. (C) Once again, high marks to the Norwegians for patience and persistence. Our sense is that the Tigers realize gutting the SLMM is not in their interest but will hold out into August to see if anything can be gained in exchange for agreeing to drop the issue. The Norwegians are right to put the onus for new ideas on the parties but we fear Hanssen-Bauer will find fresh thinking in short supply when he shows up the week after next. End Comment.

ENTWISTLE